
Title: Dreams and Nightmares

Author: Vailanna

Curling her body into a ball, Vailanna let out a soft whimper, feeling the unnatural chilled touch even through the deep sleeping potion induced slumber. Out of the hazy dreams flitting though her head, a raspy whispering was heard, slowly increasing in volume, calling her name... Shivering she soon recognized the voice, it was that of Rune Artisem, her master. In her mind, a darkness grew, and the form of the lich emerged from the shadows. He gave her an icy smile, and ran his boney fingers along the scar on her left cheek "Now my little pet... I will give you a gift." He gave a low cackle, still stroking her cheek. Her eyes fixed on his as she fought the urge to pull away from his cold touch. "I want you to remember a bit of your past..," his cruel smile widened as he looked down at her, "and know this.. what you remember will be only a taste of what you will endure should those light-bringing fools try to cross me.."
Vailanna stared up at him, a look of confusion on her face. Rune suddenly reached down, and pulling off her soft leather gloves, he cast them aside, took her hands, and turned her

wrists upwards. "Now little one.. REMEMBER!" he screamed.

Sitting up, her eyes darted around the room, and she relaxed as she recognized her room, and a little smile found its way on her lips as she sank back into her pillows. "A dream...", Her eyes began to close again, but suddenly flew open again as the door was flung open with a loud bang. Verimos, the daemon servant of Rune quickly strode across her little room, and gripped her arm tightly, hauling her up to her feet. Giving him an indignant frown, she stared at her sparring partner, not understanding his behavior. "Are we training again so soon?" she asked. The huge creature merely dragged her along down to the courtyard in front of the house. His vise-like grip never wavered as a black gate formed in front of them, and he stepped in, pulling her along. As they stepped back out of the gate, Vailanna shivered as the icy wind easily tore through her nightdress, her feet already starting to numb from the snow as Verimos tugged her toward Golgotha.

"Caina?" she whispered, "Why.. why are we here?" "Verimos.. please.." she begged, wanting to know why she was being brought to the icy lands in the middle of the night. He looked down at her but once, then continued on, up the steps of the great place

and into the hall.
Vailanna's jaw dropped as
her eyes adjusted to the
dim place, her eyes
widening as the sight of
Rune standing alongside
Azalin, the great Lich
Lord. A fear gripped her
as both of them turned
to look at her. "Rune..
why.." she began. Rune
instantly cut her off
"Silence!" Rune looked
toward Verimos, who
clapped one hand
over Vailanna's mouth,
then wrapped one arm
around her waist, and
carried her to the top
of the tower...

Vailanna, her head held
still by the daemon, was
unable to miss the sight
of the altar and the
blazing forge set up
beside it. She watched as
Rune and Azalin stepped
behind the altar, starting
a long ritual. She couldn't
understand any of words
they spoke, but there
was to be no mistaking
the cold smiles on their
faces as the liches
motioned Verimos to bring
her forward. Fear
clutched her as he
forcibly dragged her
forward, his knee bending
into the back of her
knees, dropping her into a
kneel before the altar.
Starting to panic, she
tried pulling back as
two of the Skull's
priests each grabbed her
arms, wrenching them
down to lay on the
altar's surface. Azalin
looked toward Rune,
nodding his approval of
the warrior, "She will
serve us well". Rune,
looking pleased, glanced
toward the forge, and
cackled as each lich
reached toward a handle

sticking out of the hot flames. The liches again began their chanting, and the priests gripped Vailanna's arms tighter as the liches slowly approached her. Each lich held in his hand an enchanted brand, their ends glowing an eerie purplish black instead of the expected reddish glow of burning metal.

"Please.. n-n--nooooo" she croaked out desperately. Verimos tightly wrapped both his arms around her, holding her motionless as the two liches continued their enchantments, and then each pressed a brand with his own seal into her bared skin. The pain was unbearable, and as she screamed over and over the liches cruelly smiled down at her, not letting unconsciousness grant her a respite.

Vailanna awoke with a start, finding herself in a jail cell in the town of Wilmeth, her mind still feeling a bit fuzzy from the potion. She struggled to get to her feet, trying to wake fully as the sounds of her own screams faded away from her mind. "It.. was.. a nightmare.." she shook her head a little, "Surely.. just.. a nightmare" Her eyes glanced down at her wrists, staring at the faintly glowing marks. "He meant only.. to scare me.." she whispered "Just.. a nightmare" She leaned against the wall and stared out the window, trying to convince herself that the nightmare was just a tactic used by her master, yet an icy chill gripped her heart as

she began questioning
just how favored a pet
she was to Rune...